

Barrington, fire district both prepared for split  
By Eric Peterson Daily Herald  
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Barrington village officials remain far from convinced that their long-running relationship with the Barrington Countryside Fire Protection District will end on New Year's Eve.

But if it does, the directions for a smooth transition for both agencies already are laid out clearly in their current intergovernmental agreement, Barrington Village Manager Jeff Lawler said Wednesday..

The village runs the Barrington Fire Department to provide fire protection and emergency services within its borders. But for decades, the fire district — a separate taxing body — has contracted with the village to provide firefighter/paramedics for areas outside the border, including portions of Barrington Hills, Inverness, Lake Barrington, South Barrington and unincorporated Cook, Lake and McHenry counties.

Last fall, the fire district gave notice that it wants to end the relationship Dec. 31, 2013 out of frustration that the village hasn't allowed it to add staff and purchase additional equipment — even at the district's own expense.

Both Lawler and Barrington Village President Karen Darch believe there's still time to negotiate a new contract. But if the split does happen, there's no reason to believe a hardship would ensue for either agency, Lawler said.

"If this were to happen, I think there is enough time to prepare for this," he said.

The village would keep Fire Station 1 on Northwest Highway, and the district would keep Station 2 in Barrington Hills and Station 3 in Lake Barrington.

While both agencies own some of their own equipment outright, the equipment they co-own would be fairly divided by a process that begins with a coin flip.

The district has already begun sending out requests for proposals for 33 employees from a chief on down.

The village would have to lay off its excess employees after a split. Its union contract states that the cuts would be determined by seniority, Lawler said.

There's a provision that the fire district could grant preferred hiring status to those about to be laid off by the village. But that clause would not be able to be invoked until a split becomes more inevitable than it is now, Lawler said.

Such specifics over a hypothetical split were gradually added to the intergovernmental agreement in recent years as it began to seem more likely, Lawler said.

While both sides are attempting to foresee all possible issues, there may still be some bumps in the road, he conceded.

"Obviously there are unknowns, because we've never done this," Lawler said.

Unlike the village, fire district officials insist the point of no return is already past. They plan to hire an interim administrator next month from among five candidates identified by the Illinois Fire Chiefs Association.

Barrington fire district searching for its own staff  
By Eric Peterson Daily Herald  
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According to Barrington Countryside Fire Protection District trustees, questions over their proposed year-end split with the Barrington Fire Department have changed from theoretical to practical — from "why?" to "how?"

That means starting a process by which the fire district — a separate taxing body — will begin acquiring its own staff and equipment rather than receiving them by contract from the village of Barrington.

As far as the staff goes, district President Tom Rowan said requests for proposals have already gone out seeking 33 employees from a chief on down who will be ready to take over from Barrington Fire Department workers on Jan. 1.

"I'm actually planning on spending New Year's Eve here," Rowan said at the district's board meeting Monday night at Fire Station 3 in Lake Barrington.

While the Barrington Fire Department was originally created to serve only the village of Barrington, the fire district covers a larger area just outside it that includes portions of Barrington Hills, Inverness, Lake Barrington, South Barrington and unincorporated Cook, Lake and McHenry counties.

Fire Station 1 in Barrington will remain the Barrington Fire Department's, but a split would leave the fire district with Station 2 in Barrington Hills as well as Station 3.

The agreement between the two agencies spells out an even division of the equipment they co-own — to be started with a coin flip, Rowan said.

Notice of a Dec. 31, 2013, end to their long-running contract was given last fall after district trustees said they'd become frustrated by the village's refusal to supply the levels of equipment and staff the district requested.

But Barrington Village President Karen Darch on Monday said she doesn't think the relationship is beyond repair. She said adequate time remains for any and all business still required between them.

However, Rowan believes the only discussion remaining is the calling of "heads" or "tails" to start dividing the equipment.

"Our goal has always been to work well with the village, but we haven't been able to get the personnel and the equipment that we wanted," he said.